



Together on the Way of the Cross

Praying, reflecting and journeying
together during Lent

23–29 March 2020



THE
LUTHERAN
WORLD
FEDERATION

A Communion
of Churches

Introduction

The season of Lent is a time for introspection, prayer, fasting, and sharing. While many believers will embark on their own individual journey of spiritual renewal, Christian life goes beyond the privatized individualistic endeavor. Our pilgrimage on earth is both personal, communal, and even global. It is about our life together, and the call to mutually encourage one another during trying times.

We offer this guide to accompany fellow believers in affirming ‘togetherness’ within the communion of Lutheran churches worldwide. It is organized in a threefold format based on Luther’s guide for doing theology through *Oratio* (prayer), *Meditatio* (meditation), and *Tentatio* (trial/struggle). This season, in particular, offers an opportunity to immerse ourselves in a world where:

there is the *tentatio*, testing (Anfechtung). This is the touchstone. It teaches you not only to know and understand but also to experience how right, how true, how sweet, how lovely, how mighty, how comforting God’s word is: it is wisdom supreme. (Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works: Career of the Reformer*. Vol. 34, 286-87.)

Inspired by Luther, let us cultivate the art of praying and reflecting together as a communion in Christ. As we discern God’s wisdom through agonizing struggles in our world today, often wounded and marred by division, disappointment, and despair, our faith gives us hope to persevere by journeying together no matter what.

Indeed, God accompanies each of us step by step together on the way of the cross.

Note: All prayers are cited from *Koinonia: Services and Prayers* (Geneva: The Lutheran World Federation, 2004). All scriptural texts are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

Monday, 23 March 2020

Praying Together

Eternal God,
you call us to ventures of which we cannot see the ending,
by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown.
Give us faith to go out with courage,
not knowing where we go,
but only that your hand is leading us
and your love supporting us,
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Reflecting Together

Isaiah 59:9-19

Acts 9:1-20

¹⁷ So Ananias went and entered the house. He laid his hands on Saul and said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” ¹⁸ And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he got up and was baptized, ¹⁹ and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

Journeying Together

May we regain a fresh vision of God’s call upon us and renewed strength to serve faithfully in the ministries of proclamation, diakonia, and advocacy.

Tuesday, 24 March 2020

Praying Together

Almighty and everlasting God, source of holiness,
your Son Jesus Christ walked the ways of this world
to give meaning to our lives,
to break the old mentality of exclusion
and to unite us together on new paths of solidarity.
Strengthen our trust in your mercy.
Enliven our hopes for a more just and humane society,
and bring all people who suffer from persecution
and discrimination
into the joys of your life,
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Reflecting Together

Isaiah 42:14-21

Colossians 1:9-14

¹¹ May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light.

Journeying Together

During troubled times of uncertainty and crisis, let us not only “endure everything with patience” but also unite together “on new paths of solidarity” towards “a more just and humane society.”

Wednesday, 25 March 2020

Praying Together

Gracious and holy God,
lead us from death to life,
from falsehood to truth.
Lead us from despair to hope,
from fear to trust.
Lead us from hate to love,
from war to peace.
Let peace fill our hearts, our world, our universe,
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord

Reflecting Together

Isaiah 60:17-22

Matthew 9:27-34

²⁸ When he entered the house, the blind men came to him; and Jesus said to them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” They said to him, “Yes, Lord.” ²⁹ Then he touched their eyes and said, “According to your faith let it be done to you.” ³⁰ And their eyes were opened.

Journeying Together

Are there moments when we are unsure whether God is able to heal a wounded world?
May the healing of the blind men by Jesus inspire us to trust God once again.

Thursday, 26 March 2020

Praying Together

Good and gracious God,
you guided Noah over the flood waves:

hear us.

You brought Hagar to the well:

hear us.

You inspired Deborah for her tasks:

hear us.

You recalled Jonah from the sea:

hear us.

In Christ you taught us the mystery of your love:

hear us.

Grant us the guidance of your Spirit,
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Reflecting Together

Ezekiel 1:1-3, 2:8-3:3

Revelation 10:1-11

¹⁰ So I took the little scroll from the hand of the angel and ate it; it was sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach was made bitter. ¹¹ Then they said to me, “You must prophesy again about many peoples and nations and languages and kings.”

Journeying Together

May God grant us wisdom to interpret the signs of the times and courage to speak truth to power.

Friday, 27 March 2020

Praying Together

God of the Exodus,
your will is known
when you feed the hungry,
house the poor
and free the oppressed.
Make us one with all who cry for justice.
May we who speak your praise
struggle for your justice in all the world,
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Reflecting Together

Ezekiel 33:10-16;

Revelation 11:15-19

¹⁵ Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying,
“The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord
and of his Messiah,
and he will reign forever and ever.”

Journeying Together

Let us align ourselves with the values of God’s kingdom that uplift justice, peace, and reconciliation.

Saturday, 28 March 2020

Praying Together

We thank you, O God,
for all your servants and witnesses of times past:
for Abraham and Sarah,
for Moses, Aaron and Miriam,
for Deborah and Gideon,
for Samuel and Hannah,
for Isaiah and all the prophets,
for Mary, Peter and Paul,
for Mary, Martha and Mary Magdalene,
for Stephen and all the saints
in every time and in every land.
In your mercy, give us, as you gave them,
the hope of salvation and the promise of eternal life,
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Reflecting Together

Ezekiel 36:8-15
Luke 24:44-53

⁴⁴ Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.”

Journeying Together

May God open our minds to understand the scriptures and also to discern how God works in history.

Sunday, 29 March 2020

Fifth Sunday in Lent

Praying Together

¹ Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD.

² Lord, hear my voice!

Let your ears be attentive

to the voice of my supplications!

– *Psalm 130:1-2*

Reflecting Together

Ezekiel 37:1-14

Romans 8:6-11

John 11:1-45

²⁵ Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” ²⁷ She said to him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.”

The powerful pairing of Ezekiel 37 with John 11 for the season of Lent is no accident; it is a matter of life and death—and the liminal space in between.

Angels and demons dwell in liminal space: the wilderness. Lent begins with Jesus, thrust into the wilderness, tempted by the devil: alone, hungry, faithful; finally ministered to by angels. Liminal space means leaving behind one reality to wander in the wilderness before reaching the next. Liminal space, a season of waiting and not knowing is truly a time for transformation.

In Ezekiel 37, God’s question: “Human: can these bones live?” is answered “Lord, you alone know.” People: “Our bones are dried up and our Hope is gone; we are cut off.” God: “Prophesy! ... I will put my Spirit in you and you will live...” Prophesy—speak God’s life-giving word of hope! Proclaim God’s promises to life!

John 11 reveals Jesus, profoundly moved, weeping at Lazarus' death. Disciples Mary and Martha display grief: anger, blaming: "Lord if you had been here, our brother would not have died." Jesus does not deny their grief, instead he leads them further. Martha's powerful confession proclaims Jesus as Messiah. Jesus commands those gathered to remove the stone from the tomb, then proclaims God's power commanding Lazarus to come out. Jesus charges the crowd to remove Lazarus' bindings to set him free.

In this time of transition, this liminal space—we can suffer grief: confusion, anger, blaming, and isolation can seem tomb-like. Wrestling with demons, we may feel like our hope is gone and we are cut off. God's power over all death-dealing forces is greater. Christ calls us out of our tombs of despair to life.

Journeying Together

Let us draw near to Jesus who restores us to community and empowers us to roll away the stones that entomb and remove bindings of fear, anxiety, anger, shame—restoring life and freedom to God's beloved.